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ABSTRACT

The information in this booklet is intended to help a parent prepare and determine his child's readiness for school. This School Readiness Inventory, a standard informational checklist on developmental readiness skills, enables the parent to measure his child's progress. Tests are included so that parents may guage their child's visual perceptual development, auditory perceptual (listening) skills, motor development, social development, emotional development, intellectual development, and language development. The scores, their interpretation, and suggested recommendations are provided to help the parent better understand how his child compares to the "average" child beginning school. (CS)

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A PARENTS GUIDE TO SCHOOL READINESS

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Anthony J. Cedoline, M.S.

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Anthony J.
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INTRODUCTION

SCHOOL READINESS may be defined as the sum total of all characteristics involved in learning. It is a broad, all-inclusive concept that emphasizes the interrelationship of many important learning factors.

You, as a parent, are justifiably concerned about the future of your child. School is one of the most important of all steps toward future success or failure. Both you and your child are probably enthusiastic and optimistic, but equally perplexed and anxious concerning the uncertainty that awaits at the doorstep of school. You have the absolute right to be aware of your child's readiness for school and future success. The information in this booklet will prepare you to better understand your child and help him to become ready for a successful school experience. Most important, you will learn that chronological age* *is not a fool proof method* of predicting school readiness.

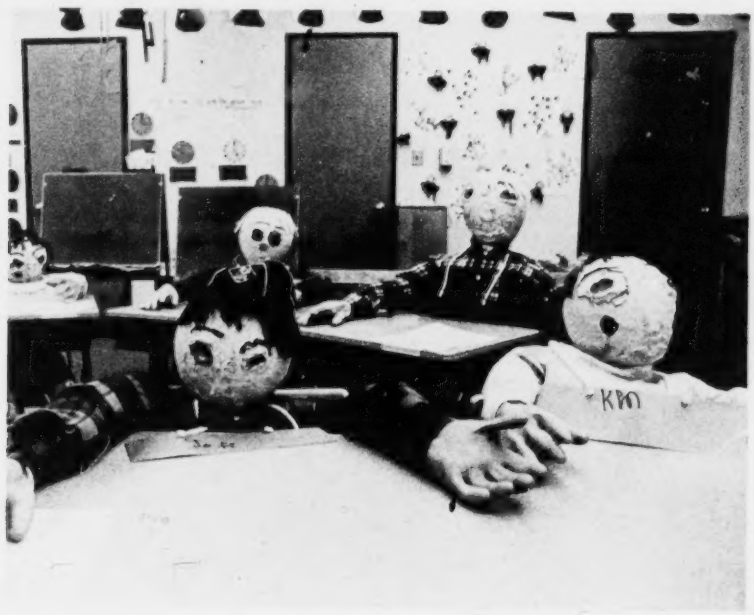
It is a commonly accepted fact that our schools contain a significant number of educational casualties. A large number of these casualties are the direct result of limited readiness. Most, if not all, of these problems could be resolved through remedial help, parent understanding, and cooperation. If parents could become more aware of their child's readiness, they might help him make more appropriate decisions regarding his future. Parents who can recognize inadequate readiness might better assist their child's growth by following some relatively simple procedures and recommendations.

With these thoughts in mind, the old adage "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" would appear to be clear. Parents must

Chronological age is defined as time period measured in years and months from birth.

become aware, alert, helpful, and preventive. Parents should function as "first-aid men" only after severe damage has been done to their child."

Children are continually developing in all directions. A child grows physically, emotionally, socially, intellectually, and communicatively every day of his existence. It is the exception rather than the rule that children develop at the same rate in all of the above areas. Since no child has the same experiences as another, each child develops his own unique developmental pattern. The uniqueness of each pattern creates not only strengths and weaknesses but particular modes of learning. Some children need extra time to develop certain readiness skills. Almost all developmental areas are learned. Parents with proper understanding and training could help immeasurably in areas that can be easily corrected. Education includes the cooperative efforts of home and school, and parents can assist this crucial process.



The advent of "Sesame Street," "The Electric Company," and other mass media presentations has further confused and complicated the process and understanding of readiness. The school readiness of youngsters in selective areas has changed dramatically in recent years. Never before have youngsters come to school knowing as many

numbers, letters, and sounds as today. As a result, what were formerly considered to be adequate school skills are no longer applicable. Kindergarten is no longer a play yard, a nap, milk, and crackers. Kindergarten has become almost as academic as first grade was one generation ago. Parents have little in the way of a yardstick to gauge their child's development.

Schools in almost all states continue to use only one means of measure – age. However, there is not otal agreement among the different states. Less restrictive states such as California admit children to kindergarten as young as four years, nine months. It would appear to even the most casual observer that chronological age alone does not guarantee readiness or success. To secure conclusive evidence of school readiness, all developmental areas need careful consideration. These areas include:

I **Physiological** – development of all the scenes and normal physi-physical growth.
   A. Chronological Age
   B. Height and Weight
   C. Sex
   D. Visual Perception (visual memory, discrimination, and association)
   E. Auditory Perception (auditory memory, discrimination, and association)
   F. Motor Perception (large and small muscle development and coordination)
   G. Other Body Functions (glandular, neurological, hormonal, etc.)

II **Social** – ability to relate successfully with other people.

III **Emotional** – ability to relate independently with one's environment.

IV **Intellectual** – ability to gain understanding and utilize information in everyday experiences.

V **Language** – ability to communicate coherently with others.

INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENTAL AREAS

I. PHYSIOLOGICAL

A. Chronological Age

If your child is five years and six months of age at the time he begins kindergarten, he will have had adequate time to develop most skills. As mentioned in an earlier section, age does not guarantee readiness. Research evidence supports the fact that kindergarten youngsters who were five years and six months or older did significantly better than their younger counterparts. The older group had fewer retentions, were better adjusted, and had higher achievement scores. To parents, a four to six month age difference appears to be very small, but to the child it may represent more than ten percent of his total life.

B. Height and Weight

Your child's height and weight alone may not tell a great deal but used in conjunction with other readiness factors may add further understanding. The following tables provide information on average height and weight for 5 and 5½ year old children of each sex.

BOYS	GIRLS
(5 years, 0 months)	
Height – 43 inches	Height – 43 inches
Weight – 40½ pounds	Weight – 40½ pounds
(5 years, 6 months)	
Height – 44½ inches	Height – 43½ inches
Weight – 44 pounds	Weight – 43 pounds

If your child is different from the average, it would simply mean that he belongs to the 50% who are not of average weight and height. Furthermore, height and weight (like most physical processes) are related to hereditary traits.

C. Sex

Research data suggests that learning and behavior disorders were three to ten times more frequent in males than in females of the same chronological age.* Unfortunately, boys generally are disadvantaged because they have difficulty identifying with female teachers. Some studies have shown that boys can do as well as girls when placed in male teacher environments.

D. Visual Perception

Not only is vision itself important, but other equally critical factors such as visual memory, visual discrimination, and visual association are extremely essential to learning.

Visual memory is the ability to remember what has been seen; e.g., to remember the way to walk to school.

Since most readiness problems are related to boys, the pronouns his/him are used throughout this booklet.

Visual discrimination is the ability to tell the difference between similar looking things; e.g., the letter M vs. W, or *was* vs. *saw*.

Visual association is the ability to associate what one sees with another sense; e.g., seeing and hearing, seeing and writing, etc.

Research data suggests that of all skills, visual discrimination was the best predictor of first grade reading success. Another researcher found visual perceptive scores to have greater predictive value for reading success than intelligence.

E. Auditory (sound) Perception

Hearing is necessary to develop adequate speech pronunciation and overall language. There are other areas of auditory skills.

Auditory memory is the ability to remember and repeat spoken words or instructions.

Auditory discrimination is the ability to tell the difference between similar sounding letters, words, or phrases.

Auditory association is the ability to relate spoken sounds, words with other senses, e.g., auditory-visual association, auditory-motor association.

If a youngster cannot hear, differentiate, remember, or associate what is spoken, he will not be able to follow directions given in school. Auditory skills are a very important part of the sounding out process (phonics) associated with seeing and reading printed words.

F. Motor Perception

Large (gross motor) and small muscle (fine motor) coordination are important keys to successful development. A child who is restricted from practicing the use of his large and small muscles will develop more slowly than a youngster who has lots of practice. Large muscle skills such as crawling, walking, jumping, skipping, and hopping develop sooner than small muscle skills such as coloring, drawing, copying, printing, writing, or building a model. If gross motor skills are delayed, fine motor may also be slowed. Gross and fine motor skills are directly related to school readiness.

If a youngster cannot run, throw, tie a knot, draw, fasten buttons, copy, cut, or do the things which are considered key skills for school, he will need special help.

Coordination of the visual, auditory, and motor senses is the ultimate goal. Such coordination is necessary for adequate educational functioning, but it is the last step in a child's development.

G. Other Body Functions

Body functions such as glandular activity, neurological processes, hormonal balance, body metabolism, and others are all important to promotion of smooth, healthy development. All children should have a complete preschool physical examination by the family physician. The physician can also provide health information such as immunizations which the school may require. A physically healthy child will have more learning opportunities than an unhealthy child.

II SOCIAL MATURITY

Your youngster's social maturity will depend mostly upon his experiences with youngsters his own age. Generally, the more experiences he has had in dealing with and adjusting to his peer group, the better his social adjustment. Social maturity can be gauged by how well a child is able to adapt to other youngsters in playful and serious activities.

III EMOTIONAL MATURITY

Social and emotional maturity are interrelated. A youngster's emotional maturity is dependent upon how he feels about himself. A youngster who has unreasonable fears, who is unable to care for his toilet needs, or cannot be away from home for short periods of time will have much more difficulty developing adequate readiness skills. Emotional maturity can be measured by how well a child can

function independently, i.e., without his parents in a supervised environment.

IV INTELLIGENCE

Your child's ability to gain, understand, and utilize information provided by his senses is defined as intelligence. Intellectual ability has several sub-areas of development. They include:

- Recognition or awareness of concepts such as an idea, word, or thought;
- Remembering past experiences or previous concepts;
- Categorizing or classifying concepts – putting them in some logical order; and
- Finally, the process is completed through analyzing, judging, deciding, assessing, or selecting.

Even though intelligence may not be the best predictor of school readiness, it is of utmost concern for a youngster to understand his environment and learn from his experiences.

V LANGUAGE

A youngster beginning school must be able to understand normal use and comprehension of language to be even slightly successful. The same youngster must be able to speak clearly to make himself understood to others.

Some sound errors in pronouncing the "t," "r," "ch," "sh," "th," "z," "s," and "v" sounds are perfectly normal for 5½ year old children.

If the youngster, however, cannot make his wishes known or understand the desires of others, his success in school will be substantially reduced. If your youngster has unintelligible speech or inadequate language comprehension, he should be brought to the immediate attention of the family physician, school speech therapist, and/or other school personnel. Without appropriate language skills, progress in other developmental areas will become delayed.

ONE CANNOT HELP but see the interrelation of the developmental areas discussed above. The Gesell Institute has found that developmental level rather than chronological age best predicted success in school. They found that as many as 30 percent of the preschool population at large may not be ready for school. It is their feeling that

youngsters need to be properly evaluated and placed for ultimate success.

An important research report indicated that children admitted to first grade based on physical and developmental screening were much more active in extra-curricular activities and received twice as many honors as their counterparts after being followed up to the high school level.

In summary, the child who is ready

- will be in proper sequence with school curriculum;
- will feel confident about himself and his accomplishments;
- will reflect a well-balanced individual who is filled with enthusiasm and curiosity; and
- will be awaiting a challenge, be able to solve problems, and be ready for success.

Through understanding and a minimum of assessment techniques, you can guide your child's development and increase his chances of a successful school experience.

HELPFUL HINTS TO PARENTS

THERE ARE MANY ways that you, as parents, can guide your child toward success while at the same time begin understanding him better. They include:

1. Most important – **Don't panic** if your child does not meet your expectations as reflected in the inventory. *Time* and *patience,* along with his feeling that he is succeeding, are what he needs most.

2. Parents can no more expect their child to grow beyond his own rate than a nurseryman can expect his prize plants to grow beyond their own rates. Too much or too little nurture can be harmful to the young child or the young plant.

3. Children can make important and dramatic changes in a short period of time (even six months). Although your child may not be able to master the inventory tasks, he has until Fall to mature at his own rate without undue pressure.

4. Working with your child to help guide his development is not a skill that comes naturally to most parents. Studies have shown that as many as two-thirds of the efforts of parents to help their children with school work are useless *or worse.* But the skill can be learned. Some of the principles are as follows:

   a. Respect the child. Recognize that each child needs to experience the world for himself, to develop independence, self direction, and responsibility for his own action. We grow from our mistakes and taking the consequences of them. Within safe limits, let the real world teach your child rather than try to do it by preaching, accusing, or forcing your will through raw power.

b. Pay for honest work. Children are like the rest of us. They will not always respond to doing what someone else decides is their natural obligation. They respond to the choice of earning. Making charts of their progress or letting tokens earned lead to a desired activity or material reward is responding to children the way we respond to the world of work.

c. State rules *only once*. Having to restate rules or nag is a sure sign that a game is being played based on a power struggle – one you as the parent can't win.

d. Do not do for a child what the child can do for himself. Each new task a child can do for himself is a source of pride both for himself and for his parents. Children can do a surprising number of things at a very early age if they are given an opportunity to try, fail, get picked up, and encouraged to try again without interference from anxious adults.

e. Be consistent. Being consistent is much easier when a child's failure, mistakes, carelessness, or irresponsibilities are understood as necessary positive acts and their natural consequences (punishment) are allowed to happen. But when one is imposing one's will on another, this can lead to guilt, uncertainty, uncontrolled anger, or softening of the punishment. Consistency is the most important key to a child rearing and learning experience.

On the basis of a relationship of mutual respect and cooperation, your experience in helping your child can be a successful and rewarding one. You will need, however, to understand some simple concepts of how a child learns.

1. Learning proceeds from the concrete to the abstract. Children learn numbers from having things to count such as apples or oranges. Later a number symbol can stand for this experience. Use material objects in place of abstract words as a beginning point.

2. Start at a point where success is easy and rewards can come quickly. Success is a better teacher than failure and defeat. Develop confidence. If he begins to fail more than succeed in the task you are teaching, always go back to a point where the child can be successful. Success is more important than speed or accelerated program.

3. Provide a variety of experiences on the same theme. Large muscle development, for example, can be improved through a wide variety

of children's games ranging from "Drop the Handkerchief" to lead-up games for volley ball.

4. Move slowly and review frequently. Learning does not occur as a smooth upward curve. It involves backward movement, and at times plateaus where little or no progress may be apparent. Do not become discouraged. Reorganization and assimilation are taking place and another growth spurt is just around the corner.

5. Children change. Their behavior moves through periods of growth and smoothing out, followed by a breakup and reorganization in preparation for the next stage. These cycles are as short as six months for the younger children. Take into account that the cooperative child of today can become the testing, independent, uncooperative child of tomorrow as a result of growth alone.

Keeping these principles in mind, our next task is an assessment of your particular child's current development status.

Name of Child _____ Sex M or F

Birthdate _____ Chronological Age _____
month/day/year years/months

Administered by Mother _____ Father _____ Other _____

THE SCHOOL READINESS INVENTORY

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

MAKING SCHOOL DECISIONS regarding your child will require knowledge of how he performs in the readiness areas already described. You may know what your child can do. Knowledge of what most children do at a given age will be even more helpful. This standard information on children's developmental readiness skills is provided by the School Readiness Inventory. This inventory is not intended to be used as a sole or final judgment of how your child may perform. Your child may show great skill in overcoming weaknesses or immaturities found by your initial assessment.

Be honest with yourself while carrying out these exercises. Since this inventory experience is for you and your child alone, be fair with yourself in your scoring. Over-optimistic scoring will only deceive you and confuse your child.

The information from the inventory may confirm your present estimates or may differ with them. It serves its best purpose when it helps you take a new and careful look at your child.

You may not be the best person to administer the inventory. A close friend or neighbor may gain cooperation free of the emotional interplay between parent and child. A child may be threatened when he finds it difficult to perform up to parental expectations. Your purpose is to better understand and improve your child's readiness, not to create emotional blocks or resistance to learning.

It is very important that you review the directions in each developmental area. A quick glance at the questions in each area will familiarize you with what you will be asking your child.

It is not necessary nor recommended to give the entire inventory in

one sitting. However, do not skim through or give unrelated parts of the test in isolation. A 4-to-6 year-old child's attention span is short. Sessions should be limited to 5-8 minutes. This length of time will cover one or two full pages. There is no need to hurry since this should be a learning experience as well as an assessment.

As each area is given and a level of frustration is reached, it is recommended that you make note of easy or difficult sections. Help your child to feel as much success as possible. Although items in which you give help are not to be scored as correct, they may prove to be valuable learning experiences. Helping your youngster to master difficult items will help you understand his speed of learning as well as to discover problem areas. Further suggestions are provided in each developmental area.

Most important of all, the inventory must be handled as a *game*. If your child sees the inventory as fun, exciting, novel, and entertaining, he will perform with enthusiasm. Generous praise will help obtain this attitude.

The inventory should be given when your child is rested and happy. A youngster who is unhappy or lacking vigor will perform less well. The room should provide privacy and quiet. If your phone is active, take it off the hook. Give your child your full and undivided attention.

As a final reminder, the data from the inventory is purely and simply additional information for you to use in combination with other factors of which you are aware. Used in this way, it will help you to make realistic decisions which will assist your child toward smooth progress in his development.

Visual Perceptual Development

Instructions

Say each letter and number in the order given. Have your child point to the one he thinks is correct. **Record the score by circling the correct responses.**

After recording the score, repeat this task. Teach your child a few correct answers to insure a feeling of success.

Scoring

Allow one point for each correct response. Write the total in the space provided at the bottom of the page.

Interpretation

A low score may reflect lack of opportunity to learn. It may also, however, indicate immaturity in visual perception. This is a common stage in pre-primary development. Reversal of letters is common. The problem is frequently outgrown.

Most 5 yr. 6 mo. youngsters know only one or two letters and numbers, but can correctly identify all of the spatial recognition items.

Letter Recognition

Say: "Point to the letter P, M, D, J, B, L, A, F." (Present them individually in this mixed-up order.)

Score

B	J	P	M	1 2 3 4
D	F	A	L	5 6 7 8

Number Recognition

Say: "Point to the numbers 4, 2, 1, 5, 3."

Score

5	2	4	3	1	1 2 3 4 5

Spatial Recognition

Point to the circle:

Score

which is largest	1 or 0
which is smallest	2 or 0
which is first	1 or 0
which is last	1 or 0

TOTAL (possible 17) _____

Colors are taught in kindergarten. This is an opportunity to determine whether your child has already mastered this task. If not, you can help him celebrate his progress as he becomes able to name colors correctly.

Instructions

Provide strips of paper in the seven colors listed. These strips can be cut out of catalogs, comics, or other colored material you may have in the house. Or colored art pads can be inexpensively purchased at a variety store.

Tell your child, "I want you to tell me the color of these different things." Show only one colored paper at a time.

When the task is over, teach him a few colors he did not know to give him some success.

Scoring

One point for each correct response. Write the total in the space provided at the bottom of the page.

Interpretation

A low score can reflect lack of learning opportunity. In rare cases color blindness may be a problem. Most children, however, simply reflect their maturity level in their scores. With experience in color matching, they soon master the test.

Most 5½ year old youngsters know four or more colors.

Color Recognition

	Score
What color is this paper (red)	1 or 0
What color is this paper (blue)	1 or 0
What color is this paper (green)	1 or 0
What color is this paper (orange)	1 or 0
What color is this paper (black)	1 or 0
What color is this paper (yellow)	1 or 0
What color is this paper (brown)	1 or 0
Point to the green paper	1 or 0
Point to the brown paper	1 or 0
Point to the orange paper	1 or 0
Point to the black paper	1 or 0
Point to the red paper	1 or 0
Point to the blue paper	1 or 0
Point to the yellow paper	1 or 0

TOTAL (possible 14)_____

Auditory Perceptual (Listening) Skills

These skills reflect a child's level of maturity and do not improve with direct training to the same degree as many others. They are perhaps the most significant predictors of reading success related to the phonics approach to reading.

Instructions

Follow the instructions for each subtest. Practice with your child by giving him the samples provided. As each test is completed, help the child gain listening skills by repeating these several times. Have him do the tasks over a time or two. This will tend to reduce his frustration. **Record the score by circling the appropriate response.**

Scoring

2 points for completely correct response with proper sequence.
1 point for all parts of the task performed but not in the proper order.
0 points for failure to perform any one part of any task.

Interpretation

Poor listening skills should not be confused with low ability or intelligence. The child may "tune out" verbal instructions and appear unable to perform. Instructions may not be remembered because they sounded blurred and confusing to the child. When talking to your child, try to be as clear and concise as possible. If unsure, ask your child to repeat your instructions.

A series of games to strengthen listening skills has been prepared by the author. These games are available from the publisher upon request.

Say: " Tell me these numbers after I finish." Read the numbers waiting one second between each number.
Practice: 5-3-2

		Score
a.	4 – 8 – 1 – 6	2, 1 or 0
b.	3 – 7 – 5 – 2	2, 1 or 0
c.	1 – 7 – 9 – 2	2, 1 or 0

Say: "Tell me the sentences in the same order I say them."
Practice: The man walked down the street.

		Score
a.	The boy ran all the way home from the store.	2, 1 or 0
b.	The girl baked a chocolate cake for her mother's birthday.	2, 1 or 0

Say: "Do the three things that I say."

a.	Stand up, close the door, and walk over to the table.	2, 1 or 0
b.	Pick up the apple, sit on the chair, and open the book.	2, 1 or 0

TOTAL (possible 14)_____

Motor Development

GROSS MOTOR (LARGE MUSCLE) SKILLS

Skills such as reading and writing require control of very small eye muscles. This is the result of a sequence of development beginning with large (gross) muscle control in activities such as walking and running.

The ability to draw a line on a chalkboard from left to right without moving one's head or body represents a further growth in this skill. Knowing where your child is on the "ladder of motor development" will help you assess the ease or difficulty he will have in keeping up with his classmates.

Instructions

Score one point for each correct response given on verbal command. After circling the response, enjoy learning about your child by teaching the skill. Keep it "light." Make it an enjoyable game.

Scoring

Total the scores for gross and fine muscle subtests on the next page and record in the space provided.

Can Your Child:

	Score
Skip by alternating with both feet for 5 seconds?	1 or 0
Cover both eyes and walk forward 4 steps?	1 or 0
Stand on one foot for 5 seconds without support?	1 or 0
Walk a ten foot long 2" x 4" board within ten seconds by walking on the four inch side?	1 or 0
Hop on one foot for 15 feet?	1 or 0
Holding his feet together, jump from a kitchen chair to the floor?	1 or 0
Throw a tennis ball 15 feet?	1 or 0
Stand on his tiptoes unassisted for 5 seconds?	1 or 0
Catch a large (9 or 10 inch) ball from 6 feet away?	1 or 0
Walk backwards three steps?	1 or 0
Ride a small bike with training wheels?	1 or 0
Tell his left hand from his right?	1 or 0

Gross Motor Total (possible 12) _____

FINE MOTOR (SMALL MUSCLE) SKILLS

Interpretation

These skills are usually easily taught and can be the basis for family recreation. Start with the gross motor areas first. Be patient. Wait for growth. Concentrate on what he *can* do. Do not spend your time working on activities he can't quite do. Some skills, like walking, come naturally and are a function of age. This is so important psychologically that it cannot be overemphasized. Change activities frequently; stop when he tires.

If your child scored 8 or below in either gross or fine motor skills, you should provide him with as many "fun" exercise activities as possible. A list of these exercises can be obtained from the publisher upon request. Growth in these areas can be slow. If you become concerned by delayed growth, contact your family physician.

Cooperation with your neighborhood school helps teachers better plan for your child's needs. If your child's teacher becomes aware of his strong or weak areas, better educational planning can be provided. This cooperation can be achieved by a preschool or early school year conference aimed at mutual concern and understanding.

Can Your Child:

	Score
Cut paper into large squares or triangles?	1 or 0
Screw a large nut on a large oiled bolt?	1 or 0
Unlock a door with a key?	1 or 0
Wash his face and brush his teeth by himself?	1 or 0
Use a knife, fork and spoon properly?	1 or 0
Copy his first name (though it may be messy)?	1 or 0
Pour himself a glass of milk or other beverage from a quart bottle?	1 or 0
Spread butter or margarine with a butter knife?	1 or 0
Button and unbutton a sweater, skirt, or coat?	1 or 0
Properly buckle shoes or belt?	1 or 0
Close a front or back zipper (pants or skirt)?	1 or 0
Lace shoes and make initial knot (not bow)?	1 or 0

Fine Motor Total (possible 12) _____

COMBINED VISUAL PERCEPTION AND FINE MOTOR COORDINATION

Children develop the skill of seeing and copying as a process separate from intelligence, social, emotional or physical development. As a result, a bright little boy can have trouble with penmanship while clearly achieving well in all other areas. This test will help you judge the possibility that this may be the case with your child.

The sequence of development (indicated by the age at which each of the tasks is usually performed) has been carefully established by research. For example, a circle is usually drawn with ease by a 3 year old child.

Instructions

Show your child each figure and ask him to draw another one, just like the one shown in the space to the right of the figure. Cover the examples below and on page 32 with a piece of paper to discourage copying of the examples. Give your child an opportunity to make more than one at this time. If necessary, provide additional paper. Accept what he does with praise. Do not try to teach him to master this task at this time.

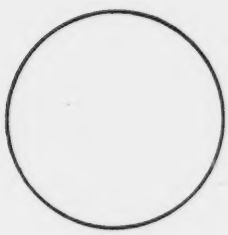
Scoring (See examples)

Circle: Count any enclosed form as passing. This figure is drawn correctly by most three year olds.

Square: Any figure (however distorted) which has four corners is satisfactory. This figure is drawn correctly by most five year olds.

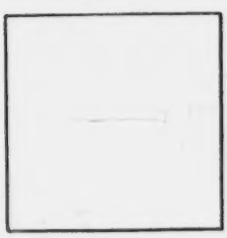
Say: "Make a circle just like this one."

Score
2
1
0



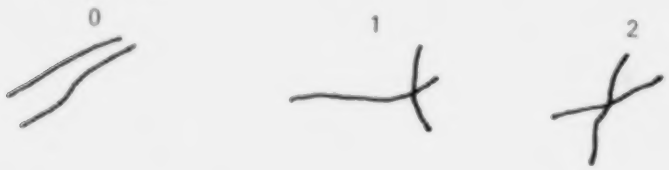
Say: "Make a square just like this one."

Score
2
1
0

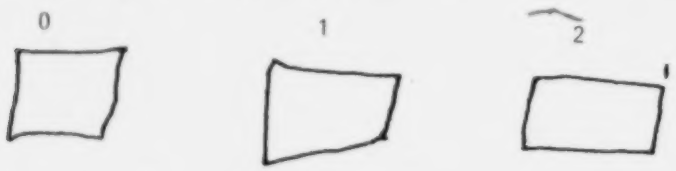


Subtotal _____

Cross: Consider any figure with crossing center lines, regardless of the angle, as acceptable. This figure is drawn correctly by most five year olds.



Rectangle: Top and bottom sides must be longer than ends; corners must be present and a tendency toward parallel sides obvious. This figure is drawn correctly by most 5½ year olds.



Triangle: Must be recognizable as a triangle but need not be drawn with base parallel to edge of paper nor with side of equal length. This figure is drawn correctly by most 5½ year olds.

Allow 2 points for each successful drawing, 1 point for those in question.

Interpretation

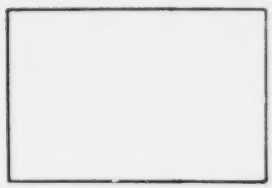
If your child is unable to complete the circle, square, and cross, these can be practiced by tracing over large figures drawn on a blackboard. While there is little cause for concern at the preschool level, if a child continued to lag in visual-motor development, a referral for professional help may be wise. Such perceptual motor development lag may indicate the need for special training in any of several programs commercially available.

If your child is able to draw all of the figures, he is well on his way to success in printing and writing.

Say: "Make a cross just like this one."

Score
2
1
0

Say: "Make a rectangle just like this."



Score
2
1
0

Say: "Make a triangle just like this."

Score
2
1
0

Subtotal _____

TOTAL (possible 10) _____

Social Development

Your child's ability to relate to other children or adults can be considered his social maturity level. Without adequate social skills he will be unable to communicate successfully with others. Deficiencies in this area will also make it more difficult to adapt to real life experiences. School, especially kindergarten and first grade, provide definite social environments.

Instructions

Carefully review the questions listed on the opposite page. Ask and respond to each according to your opinion or feeling. If you are unsure of yourself, ask a reliable third party for her opinion. Praise your child for the tasks he can do; show him how to respond to those he can't.

Scoring

Circle the correct number. For each *yes* response, circle the number 1. For each *no* response, circle the number 0. Add the total number of *yes* responses.

Interpretation

Your child's social maturity will depend upon what he sees and imitates from his parents, significant adults and other children. His ability to experience social situations by visiting friends, having an occasional baby sitter, practicing roles (a father, teacher, etc.), and answering phones or the door, will all provide him with the necessary practice. Sheltering him will only lead to delay in reaching social maturity.

If your child's score is 9 or less, provide him with the direct experience that he lacks by giving him practice in doing the things suggested by the test items.

As you recall your child's behavior, does he:

	Score Yes No
Avoid breaking into other people's conversations, but when necessary, excuses himself?	1 or 0
Answer phone properly by saying "Hello" and identifying himself?	1 or 0
Understand others needs by not walking into rooms with closed doors?	1 or 0
Listen to and follow the directions of a babysitter?	1 or 0
Play cooperatively with one or more children?	1 or 0
Willingly share his possessions with other children his own age?	1 or 0
Care for his bathroom needs by knowing when, where, and how to relieve himself?	1 or 0
Go to a friend's house several times a week providing it is within a block and the play is supervised by an adult?	1 or 0
Show that he is happy, willing and looking forward to going to school?	1 or 0
When asked, tell his age without using his fingers?	1 or 0
When asked, tell where he lives (street and city)?	1 or 0
When asked, tell the first names of his mother, father, and siblings?	1 or 0
Understand and accept humor?	1 or 0
Cross streets by himself by looking both ways before stepping off the curb?	1 or 0
Follow simple directions after being told only once?	1 or 0

Total (possible 15) _____

Emotional Development

Your child's emotional development reflects his feelings toward himself. His level of emotional maturity indicates his level of independence and personal security. If your youngster feels good about himself, can make simple decisions and function individually without constant prodding, he is well on his way toward personal success.

Instructions

Ask yourself the questions listed on the opposite page. Respond according to your opinion or feeling. If you are unsure ask a *reliable* and *objective* third party for her opinion.

Scoring

Circle the correct number. For each *no* response, circle the number 1. For each *yes* response, circle the number 0. Add the total number of *no* responses.

Interpretation

Your child's emotional development will depend a great deal upon parental consistency, ability to make mistakes and learn from them, self-respect achieved by others' opinion of him, amount of love, attention and affection he has received. If your child's score is 11 or less, it would be advisable to consult your family physician, school psychologist, school counselor, and/or school principal.

As you recall your child's behavior, is he:

	Score No Yes
Extremely fearful of new situations?	1 or 0
Overactive? (More active than most children his age.)	1 or 0
Overly aggressive or hostile while playing with other children?	1 or 0
Extremely quiet, shy or nontalkative?	1 or 0
Very easily distracted?	1 or 0
Constantly daydreaming?	1 or 0
Wetting his bed frequently?	1 or 0
Constantly telling make-believe stories?	1 or 0
Extremely fearful of making mistakes or taking a risk?	1 or 0
Easily depressed?	1 or 0
Often bothered by unreasonable fears (dogs, darkness, death, etc.)?	1 or 0
Unable to make simple two-choice decisions (e.g. vanilla or chocolate, yes or no)?	1 or 0
Unable to leave the house for an extended period of time (1 or 2 hours) to play at a friend's house?	1 or 0
Unable to sit and perform an interesting activity for 15 minutes?	1 or 0
Unable to find interesting things to do by himself (most of the time) without needing constant direction and prodding?	1 or 0

Total (possible 15)_____

Intellectual Development

INFORMATION AND COMPREHENSION

Your child's intellectual development is an important predictor of eventual school success. Intellectual skills are evidenced by your child's efficiency in gaining, understanding and using information. If your child cannot obtain and gain understanding from his experiences his chances of success in school are minimized. This developmental area includes simple awareness (how many ears you have), associations from books, TV or home (what animal meows, books are made of____) and differences (sister is a girl, brother is a____). These skills help your youngster to comprehend and categorize things and ideas.

Instructions

Explain that you would like to know some things. "I will ask you some questions. I want you to tell me the answers." Ask the question slowly and clearly. Repeat it only once. After recording the score, tell him the right answer and have him repeat it. Praise him.

Scoring

There are many acceptable answers. In almost all cases the answer is self-explanatory. Most questions have several answers (e.g. From what animal do we get meat? Answer, cow, pig, lamb, etc. Not HORSE, DOG, or CAT). In some cases, your youngster may give you incomplete answers. If this occurs, ask him to explain it further (e.g. What is a bike made of? Answer, paint – what is under the paint?). Add up all the correct responses.

Interpretation

From these questions you will be better able to understand your child's areas of strengths or weaknesses. You will also be able to teach him the correct responses and identify areas in which he will need further help. If he needs help knowing differences, you can make up similar questions that can be converted into games or cut out pictures in magazines and separate into categories.

If your child scores 10 or less and continues to have difficulty learning the above, consult your school psychologist, school counselor, or school principal.

Ask each of the following questions:

	Score
How many ears do you have? _____	1 or 0
How many feet do you have? _____	1 or 0
How many feet does a dog have? _____	1 or 0
What animal says meow? _____	1 or 0
Which goes slower, a bike or a car? _____	1 or 0
From what animal do we get meat to eat? _____	1 or 0
From what animal do we get fresh eggs to eat? _____	1 or 0
What are books made of? _____	1 or 0
What is a bike made of? _____	1 or 0
What man brings us letters and packages? _____	1 or 0
What are windows used for? _____	1 or 0
What are teeth used for? _____	1 or 0
How are a pencil, pen, and crayon alike? _____	1 or 0
Sister is a girl, brother is a _____?	1 or 0
An elephant is big, a ladybug is _____?	1 or 0
You put shoes on your feet, you put gloves on your _____?	1 or 0
An airplane goes fast, a turtle goes _____?	1 or 0
In summer it is hot, in winter it is _____?	1 or 0
You hear with your ears, you smell with your _____?	1 or 0

Total (possible 19)_____

BODY CONCEPT

Your child's concept of his body is related to his intelligence. He will communicate this through his drawings. When requested to draw a man or woman, he usually has reference to himself. Each child must proceed through a specific sequence in this process. For example, eyes are commonly drawn without pupils or eyebrows by almost all preschool children. A youngster adds more and more body detail as he grows older. You can make a reasonable estimate of your child's conceptual ability (a form of intelligence) by following the directions for this test carefully.

Instructions

Provide a piece of plain white or buff drawing paper and a pencil. If crayons are used, a more interesting picture results but scoring can be difficult. Ask him to draw the very best man or woman he can. Do not provide a model for him to copy and do not help him. After he is finished, ask him if he has left anything out. Children are satisfied and proud of their drawings. You need only praise him and ask him to explain any parts of the drawing you do not readily identify.

Scoring

Give 1 point for each correct response or score as indicated.

Interpretation

Research indicates that children's drawings of people do not improve by training. A week or so after training, a child will go back to his natural level. Emotional factors can confuse a drawing. Psychologists often use drawings to interpret emotional maturation. Fine motor (small muscle) coordination is also involved in drawing a person. Factors such as these may confuse a parent who is scoring this test. Therefore, use your knowledge of the child as an equally important factor in estimating his ability.

A score of 9 is considered average for 5½ year olds.

Say: "Draw the very best man (woman) that you can."

	Score
Is the head present?	1 or 0
Are the eyes present?	1 or 0
Is the mouth present?	1 or 0
Are the ears present?	1 or 0
Is the nose present?	1 or 0
Is the body present?	1 or 0
Is the neck present?	1 or 0
Are the arms present?	1 or 0
Are the hands present?	1 or 0
Are the legs present?	1 or 0
Are the feet present?	1 or 0
Are the fingers present?	1 or 0
Is the correct number of fingers present?	1 or 0
Is clothing present?	1 or 0
Is the hair present?	1 or 0
Are the nostrils present?	1 or 0
Are the eyebrows present?	1 or 0
Are the eye pupils present?	1 or 0
Are the arms and legs attached to body?	1 or 0

Total (possible 19)_____

Language Development

Understanding your child's ability to cooperate in the communication process by both his ability to express himself and his ability to comprehend language are essential. They are directly related to how he will function in school. Reading achievement is related to auditory perception and language development as well as visual perception.

Instructions

Follow the instructions and record the response by circling the score obtained. After each subtest, teach the child some correct responses before continuing. Praise him when he finally gets the answer correct.

Scoring

Give 1 point for each correct response or score as indicated.

Interpretation

Receiving communication from others, using the information by the thought process called association, and expressing oneself are each considered somewhat separate skills. They are not necessarily related to intelligence and will improve through training and as a result of simply growing up.

Have him point to his:

elbow
cheek
neck
thumb
lips
shoulders
ankles

Score (possible 7) _____

Have him show you the difference between each of the following using objects found in the house.

big and small
front and back
tall and short
up and down
small, smaller, smallest
big, bigger, biggest

Score (possible 6) _____

Have him define the following simple concrete words. (Any response that tells what it is used for or looks like is correct.)
Ask "What is a . . .

book
bike
clock
radio
story

Score (possible 5) _____

Have him perform the following directions.
Say:
Sit *beside* your daddy (brother, sister.)
Put the pencil *behind* the book.

Score (possible 2) _____

Answer the following for your child. Score 1 point for each *yes* answer.

My child started to talk by age two.
My child was speaking in sentences by age three.
My child's speech is easily understood by friends and neighbors.
My child can listen to a short story such as "The Three Bears" and repeat it in simple detail.
My child does not leave out words such as in "I go store."

Score (possible 5) _____

Have him count from 1 to 19.

Score (possible 1) _____

Have him name as many animals as he can in 60 seconds.

10 or more = 2 points
5 to 9 = 1 point
0 to 4 = 0 points

Score (possible 2) _____

Have him count five large objects such as oranges or apples. Place the objects on a table at his level.

Counting all five=2 points
Counting four =1 point
Counting three or less=0 points

Score (possible 2) _____

Total (possible 30) _____

INTERPRETATION OF SCORES

School readiness is a function of not one, but many devleopmental areas. The composite score of all developmental areas should give you a better understanding of your child's "total" readiness.

As you assessed your child in each of the areas you have become aware of his strengths or weaknesses. In most assessment areas, guidelines for interpretation have been indicated. Where necessary, helpful hints and specified referral for consultation to your physi- and/or school specialist have been suggested.

Below you will find the total or ove.all interpretation of school readiness as measured by the "School Readiness Inventory." The scores, interpretation, and suggested recommendation are provided to help you better understand how your child compares to beginning school children. These scores, their interpretations, and recommendations must be evaluated with prudence.

First of all, the results are intended for beginning kindergarten and first grade students entering in September. If you have administered the inventory to your child before September, remember that in the life of a preschool child a few months is a large segment of time. Secondly, much of learning and maturity takes place in a short span of time without parental influence or assistance. Finally, this assessment should be used as a tool toward better understanding of your child and more constructive parental involvement. The inventory should not become a final determinant.

The most important factor in this assessment process is acceptance. With understanding and acceptance, your child can be successful; without it he runs the risk of failure. Every child has qualities that are captivating, creative, worthwhile, charming, and enjoyable. Understanding and appreciation will bring them forth.

Provide the totals from each developmental area. Add the totals.

	Total
VISUAL PERCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT	
Letter, Number, Spatial Recognition *(p. 21)*	_____
Color Recognition *(p. 23)*	_____
AUDITORY PERCEPTUAL (Listening Skills) *(p. 25)*	_____
MOTOR DEVELOPMENT	
Gross Motor Skills *(p. 27)*	_____
Fine Motor Skills *(p. 29)*	_____
Combined Visual Perception and Fine Motor Coordination *(p. 33)*	_____
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT *(p. 35)*	_____
EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT *(p. 37)*	_____
INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT	
Information and Comprehension *(p. 39)*	_____
Body Concept *(p. 41)*	_____
LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT *(p. 44)*	_____
GRAND TOTAL	_____

RECOMMENDATIONS

Score	*Degree of Readiness*	*Suggested Procedure*
170–177	Readiness for Kindergarten or First Grade appears excellent.	School admittance.
140–169	Readiness for Kindergarten appears Good (140) to Very Good (169).	School admittance.
125–139	Readiness for Kindergarten appears Questionable (125) to Borderline (139).	Contact School Psychologist/Counselor and/or School Principal. Your child may need time to develop.
0–124	Readiness for Kindergarten appears Improbable or Unlikely.	Contact School Psychologist/Counselor and/or School Principal. Consult with family physician.

NOW THAT YOU have discovered how your child stands in relation to school readiness, here are some basic rules on responsible child rearing to help you—and your child.

RESPONSIBLE CHILD REARING

YOU AS PARENTS have a tremendous responsibility to provide the necessary guidance and communication for your child which will help him achieve ultimate happiness and success.

Child rearing, as you well know, is not a simple endeavor. It takes a great deal of patience, understanding, and a huge amount of work to feel secure in the belief that the child will grow up to be a constructive and happy adult. It appears, therefore, that the parents' responsibility is to mold a child into one who will become an independent adult who can function autonomously. Parents can be likened to a sculptor who must work diligently toward the goal of creating an image pleasant not only in the creator's mind, but in the minds of others who will see the final result.

As parents you are aware that all children require great amounts of love, attention, affection, encouragement, a listening ear, self-respect and someone to copy, as well as the right to make mistakes, understand limits, suffer consequences, and to have fun growing up.

Guiding your child's development is not a skill which comes naturally to most parents. However, this skill can be acquired if some the basic principles are followed.

Communication

The child quite often is spoken to in direct conversation by a "you" statement rather than by other identification (e.g., "Johnny, you are stupid," "You are lazy," "You are smart," "You are good," "You are bad.") "You" statements are meant to be factual statements, but in reality, upon careful consideration, they are opinions that have become facts based on someone's judgment. A "you" statement is an ultimate statement. It is black or white, plus or minus, and tends to categorize. A "you" statement does not communicate true feelings. Instead it tends to either stop conversation or create a power struggle. "You" statements used as an evaluation, judgment, incrimination made fact are distinctly poor methods of *initiating* communication.

Communication is essentially made up of a speaker and a listener. If the speaker wants to express himself, the best possible statement of expression is an "I" statement. An "I" statement indicates to the listener the opinions, feelings, and thoughts of the person speaking. "Johnny, I like the way your bedroom looks," "Suzy, I don't like that dress," "Bobby, that model airplane is beautiful. I really like it." An "I" statement is an honest statement. "I" statements tell the listener specifically what needs to be communicated rather than the indirect, defense-creating response of a "you" statement.

If, however, the parent is approached by the youngster, then the "you" statement can be helpful if used properly. The "you" statement can in this way be used as a question. For example, "Mommy, *I* really had fun in school today. *I* made a picture of a clown and the teacher said she really liked it." Mother: "You really had fun in school today; you enjoyed making the picture of a clown, especially when the teacher said that she liked it so much." "Yes, Mommy."

Using the "you" statement *as a question* tells the youngster that the parent is very interested in what the child is saying. It says "I hear you and I want to listen to you—what you are saying is important to me. Am I listening to you properly? Am I reflecting what you are saying?" It is with the "you" statement that the youngster feels as though his parent cares, and the clarification can be pursued. It is with the "you" statement used *as a question* that communication can proceed to deeper and more meaningful levels, e.g., an explanation of a fun experience at school might develop into deeper feelings about his teacher, friends or subject matter.

Another basic fundamental in communicating is using as few questions as possible of the why, what, when, where, variety. Instead give the youngster an opportunity to either explain or suffer consequences without over-use of communication of a negative nature; e.g., "I want the room cleaned in five minutes" rather than, "Why didn't you clean the room?" Questioning, in many cases can place the child in a position where he must be or use other non-constructive processes that divert or inhibit communication. If the youngster does something that is not acceptable, the parent who asks *why* is forcing the child to make up a story or provoking nonproductive verbal confrontation. When an unacceptable action occurs, the natural consequences approach simply letting the situation solve itself. Since real danger is infrequent a child in most cases can learn to respect reality. A parent needs only to warn this child once, e.g., "The biscuits are hot," "Running sometimes causes cuts," "If the room isn't cleaned there will be no TV tonight."

Good communication is expression through *"I"* statements used to *initiate* conversation *by the speaker*, and *"you"* statements used as a question and reflected *by the listener*. Minimizing who, what, when, type questions avoids nonproductive behavior.

Rivalry Between Siblings

Rivalry between brothers and/or sisters is quite common. Generally, the competition between them is the result of their attempts to become unique and different from one another. Usually the eldest in the family has had the greatest opportunity to carve out a niche of a very individual nature. All succeeding family members will have more difficulty finding their place and their personality within the family. The greatest rivalry is likely to occur between like sex siblings. Rivalry between brothers is more severe than between sisters. The rivalry tends to be minimal if the age between the siblings is less than 17 months. Between 18 to 36 months apart, the rivalry is generally very severe, especially if the children are of the same sex.

Parents often put themselves in a position of "referee." A referee in a family is very similar to a referee in a sports contest. Such officials very seldom win the acclaim and affection of those contending for victory. If you as a parent play the role of referee, you tend only to find yourself placed in a middle position with no place to go. If you reprimand one child while extolling the virtues of the other, you are forced in subsequent refereeing sessions to reverse your strategy. You may win with one child one time but lose with the other and vice-versa. Comparing one whild with another will only increase the rivalry.

What psychologists have found to be most productive is to relinquish the role of referee. As a result you can direct the problem to its original source—the children. For example, rather than saying, "Johnny, you are wrong and Michael is right, so you must go to your room," perhaps it would be more fair to suggest that both youngsters are in conflict, it is their problem and they must resolve it themselves. A good technique for problem resolution is to have a neutral area within

the home to which to send the youngsters. Until they resolve their problem they should not be allowed to pursue anything else.

Case: Jim was watching television. His brother George came in, changed the channel and said that he had to watch another program at his teacher's request. Jim's mother could have very easily suggested that George watch the program and sent Jim off to his room. This obviously would have created conflict. Instead, the mother immediately shut off the television, sent them to a neutral corner, and directed them to solve the problem themselves. Within a very short period of time, Jim and George had worked out a mutual solution and both were happy. Neither the mother nor either of the children "lost." Many such incidences occur each day. If the problem can be handled consistently through redirection of the problem and resolution by the children themselves, the mother's day could be much more pleasant.

Earning and Learning

In our culture it is quite common to celebrate birthdays, Christmas and other important days by purchasing material gifts and giving them to children. As a result, children conceive that there is something magical happening that results in wonderful surprises. Children, therefore, tend to expect to receive things through magic rather than understanding that earning is learning. Youngsters often times want personal luxuries. Parents, because they seek the best for their children, want to provide them with the best they can afford. Parents can therefore find themselves in a vicious circle. Youngsters demand bicycles, toys and other luxuries while parents desire obedience and respect. Perhaps a compromise can more easily be worked out. Parents often have household chores and responsibilities that children could handle. If a youngster has the option of earning what he would like, rather than simply receiving, it could create a logical and simulated work arrangement. Points, checks or tokens can be used in conjunction with progress charts. Progress charts can be used to earn desired activities or material rewards in a sensible sequence.

A youngster who receives a bicycle simply by asking does not understand the true feelings of the parents, nor the effort that went into affording the bicycle. This does not mean the youngster should be repeatedly told how difficult it was for the family to afford it. Instead, if the youngster feels responsible for buying the bicycle, it would be much more pleasant for both the parents and the child.

Imitation

Children learn through imitation. All children seek someone that they can copy. Parents are the most handy models available and their actions, words, feelings, expressions, and attitudes are slowly incorporated in the child's mind. It is the parent who will shape the mind and behavior of the child and it is also the parents' responsibility to be aware of the model that they are setting.

There are certainly other influences that model a youngster: relatives, friends, television, teachers and other children also have a substantial effect. For example, the average child will have spent 4,000 hours in front of the television set before he enters kindergarten. By the time a child finishes high school he will have watched almost one and a half times more television than he has spent in school, or 15,000 hours versus 10,400 hours of school. There seems to be no doubt that television has a major affect upon youngsters, possibly more significant than school. Help in changing one's self as a model can easily be accomplished through the cooperative efforts of both parents. If one sees undesirable characteristics being transferred to the child, changes in modeling will often change the behavior of the child. Parents can set up signals for one another. These nonverbal signals will remind the other parent that undesirable modeling is taking place. Children, however, are much more flexible and resilient to change than adults.

Love and Affection

Children are certainly more important than the family pet. Pets need a great deal of attention and affection but children need much more. If one were to casually observe the primates such as the chimpanzee, one would find a great deal of time is spent in holding and touching them. This provides the necessary ingredients for adequate security as an independent adult who can provide these same necessary ingredients to their own children. It has been found in research studies that children who have not been provided with holding and fondling at a very early age will actually succumb. Youngsters, especially those during the first 2½ years of life, need a tremendous amount of personal caressing and constant parental attention. If one were to suggest only *one* ingredient that would provide the most adequate of all child-rearing necessities it would be the holding and fondling of infants through 2½ years of age. However, this type of closeness should never be forgotten for any child at any age.

All children need to learn the concept of trust. This necessary feeling is accomplished only if the youngster's immediate environment is secure. Security is a direct result of touch. A young child's first sense is touch. It occurs before vision or hearing. Closeness, therefore, is the key to security and eventual trust.

Stimulating Independence

The child who depends upon others for continual help and assistance is invariably a very demanding child. He uses his weaknesses to get undue service and attention from important adults such as his parents, teachers and friends. He can usually do many things for himself, but he frequently will not *because* of the continued service accorded him. This type of child actually has a severe disability because of his unlimited need to seek out others to do what he feels he is incapable of doing himself. NEVER DO FOR A CHILD WHAT HE CAN DO FOR HIMSELF.

As a parent, beware of your own doubt in the abilities which permits him to continue to impress you with his assumed weaknesses. Children can do many things and have many more abilities than we give them credit for. All of us have a tendency to underestimate our abilities as well as those of others. In doing so, we make others irresponsible when we fail to let them assume necessary responsibilities.

The dependent child cannot approach new situations. Therefore, avoidance of new situations is safety. This type of child is very fearful. When fear is obvious, the best statement might be, "I know you are afraid. I will help you deal with the situation." However, the help should only involve directing the child to attack, providing him with support and encouragement but not doing it for him.

The dependent child entering kindergarten is constantly asking the teacher for assistance—in tying his shoes, finding his coat, directing him toward activities—because of his fear of entering new situations. The dependent child is continually losing things, such as a sweater, a mitten, or a toy. This type of youngster has a very poor sense of self-confidence, is extremely fearful, and very easily frus-

trated. To continue to give him help through continued assistance only continues the vicious circle of dependency. This type of child also tends to become very hostile with someone who will not provide assistance. He often runs to his support (usually a parent) who joins in the attack of teachers or other significant adults who will not play the game that he has learned and mastered.

By the time this child reaches the upper grades, his feeling of self-worth is extremely low. For example, when asked to do a social studies assignment, the dependent child will ask his peers, his parents, and his teachers to assist him. Even if the child receives a high grade in the assignment, he still does not feel good about it because somebody else has done it for him. How can one develop confidence if he is not responsible for his products? It is therefore necessary that the child assume responsibility, and whatever consequences result. If the assignment is not turned in on time, it is the teacher's responsibility to provide natural consequences. If the child's room is not kept in the manner requested by the parents, it is their responsibility to act and not talk.

Since the parent cannot maintain the power to control the child ad infinitum, the parent instead must learn to utilize situations which can exert the necessary pressure to stimulate growth and happiness. The child understands the realities of life provided he is not protected from unpleasant consequences that might disturb it. Interfering with the consequences deprives the child of an opportunity to learn to respect reality. Only in moments of real danger is it necessary to interfere with the child's natural consequences. However, these dangers are much less frequent than parents assume. Parental anger, resentment, and attack, turn the best possible natural consequences into punishment and therefore deprive reality from having its effectiveness in a natural setting.

We as a culture have a tendency to overestimate the insignificance of mistakes and devote large amounts of time to prevent or correct them. Emphasis on mistakes has a very discouraging affect on a child. One cannot build upon weaknesses but only upon strengths. It is more important to let the child experience what he can *do*, than to impress upon him his deficiency or the possibility of a calamity. Your own fearfulness gives the child a chance to play upon it in order to get some special attention or additional assistance. The courage to make mistakes is a necessary prerogative for healthy functioning. Feeling sorry for a child is only natural, but it can add immeasurable harm to an already tragic situation. If a child thinks life owes him something more than what he is able to give, he waits to get what he has coming, instead of realizing what he can give to better the situation.

Action Versus Words

Talk for the purpose of communication is of obvious importance. Talk for the sake of reprimanding becomes almost entirely ineffective. Children do not listen; instead, they become "mothe -deaf." There are times when words can only intensify a situation and perhaps have an opposite effect. A conflict situation requires action and not words. However, most parents understand these circumstances only in terms of severe punitive actions.

Words tend to be threats and parents may make threats that they are unable to carry out. Effective action at the moment of conflict is usually a natural consequence, whether it be a physical motion or self-removal from the scene. Communication through words is advised only if the child does not know what is being expressed to him. In most cases, however, the child is well aware and has been given the same explanations many times before. If verbal communication must be used, it should be as brief as possible. Never use 100 words to say what can be said in ten. Communication should be of a friendly nature. If words are used for discipline through threats, the child will eventually refuse to communicate because he has associated language with punishment.

Nagging your child will only create selective listening. The child who is told something more than once has achieved license to listen only after something has been said as many times as it takes to raise one's voice level. Nagging is a sure way to turn-off and tune-out your child. At times, writing something in a humorous way or using nonverbal signs such as hand language can be much more effective. A child who has had to be told more than once what needed to be done, will do the same when requested by his teacher or other significant adult. Nagging will only create very poor listening skills. Ask, then act—don't nag! The independent child who can make decisions, who

has superb listening skills, and who can feel good about his accomplishments, is a much healthier child who can easily assume a responsible and successful life in the future.

A parent's firmness will gain a child's respect while domination will only make him hostile and rebellious. Firmness simply indicates mature action or refusal to give into a child's demands. Domination indicates efforts to impose your will upon him. The child has a right to decide what he intends to do, but you have no obligation to give in. The distinction between respect for the child and indulgence of his wishes is a difficult distinction to make. The child may have a right not to drink his milk, but you have no obligation to provide soda pop nor the right to pressure him. Natural consequences will do this for you.

Other Influences

In our democratic atmosphere we sometimes lose perspective of our own responsibilities and look instead to others. This can create adult dependency. A mother who is concerned about what an aunt or grandparent think, and therefore responds to their thinking, reveals her doubt in her own ability. The more secure a parent is of her ability to handle a situation, the less inclined she will be to pay attention to what others may say or do. If we take our own responsibilities seriously and devote ourselves to the task of doing what we should, then we have neither the time nor the motivation to do what others' dictate. The responsibility of a parent is to constructively influence the child's life. If he learns a good relationship and cooperative interaction from his parents, others *cannot* disrupt it.

Many parents try to compensate for what they think is a damaging influence on the part of another adult in the family by going in the opposite direction. For example, if the father is too lenient, the mother tends to be too strict. Such overcompensation does not correct the mistakes of the other person, but rather adds new mistakes. A most important factor in a child's rearing is *consistency*. Neither is it helpful to side with a child. This does not fortify the child nor correct the mistake. Instead of freeing himself from negative influences, the child may employ more schemes in order to get your support, protection and/or sympathy. One *must* show him empathy if he encounters unfair treatment, but he must learn to cope with it as part of the nature of living. He can improve his predicament or make it worse. It all depends upon his courage or resourcefulness.

Dependency or overprotection may rob him of this opportunity. This type of influence can be particularly important when the child is ex-

posed to teachers who the parents may consider unjust, hostile or inadequate. Protecting the child from them and siding with the child usually aggravates the situation. It would be equally harmful to take the side of the teacher, which a child may justifiably resent. As an objective bystander you cannot take sides, but express understanding and an encouraging attitude from which a child may gain strength in coping with his predicament, whether it is with other members of the family or other persons. Taking sides is no different than playing referee. A parent will eventually lose, but more important—the child will have lost even more.

Take Time

A parent's function is no different than that of a teacher. Teaching the child essential skills requires specific time for training and instruction. These skills cannot always be accomplished through incidental comments, threats, bribes or punishment in a moment of anger. A conforming, cooperative child may learn all the necessary rules by observation, but if the spontaneous process of learning does *not* take place, special instruction is necessary. How to eat, how to dress, how to cross a street, and similar performances should be taken up one at a time in a consistent routine until each is learned in a positive setting. If a mother does not *take* time for such training she will spend much more time correcting the untrained child. When guests are present or the parents and child are in a public place, training is not possible. As a result, the child will act in his accustomed manner. In such situations, quiet removal of the child is the only other practical solution.

Beware of First Impulse

All of us are inclined to respond to a child's behavior without much thought or consideration. Without thinking, we feel compelled to correct the child's scheme, but actually succumb to his provocation and satisfy his unconscious scheme. What in effect might have happened is that the child attempted to press the panic button, hoping for a response. When we respond, we simply reward him by indicating that his attempt was successful. We then feel provoked and want to show him that he can't do that to us. He has probably succeeded in getting us involved in a contest and has just won. When we feel like throwing up our hands in despair or disgust, he has probably succeeded again. As long as our responses are based upon first impulse

we are more likely to fortify the child's mistaken attitudes than to correct them. Unless we realize when the child's actions are a bid for attention or service, we are in a poor position to respond adequately.

Very few parents are a match for the child who can constantly outwit them. Realizing a child's scheme may prevent parents from falling into his trap. Withdrawal may be the best answer if no other approach to changing his strategy seems available. It may be more dangerous to yield to the child or convict him of being bad or unable to be loved. Responding by acting hurt, pushes him deeper into hurting. Falling for his attempt to be deficient or stupid only increases his deficiency. Unless we recognize the child's goals and his attempt to press our buttons, no one can successfully counteract him.

Not falling for a child's scheme is an important counter-measure with strong corrective effects. Silence when attention is being sought (physical withdrawal) does not mean ignoring or neglecting the child but only his tactics. The less attention a child receives when he is a disturbing influence the more he needs when he is becoming a cooperative family member. Giving him attention of a nonverbal type when he is cooperating can be much more effective than indicating your pleasure through words. The child might respond more to a hug than to a dissertation of praise. We must teach—not preach—social responsibility by acting and imitating acceptable behavior.